I hate the term “Good Person”

THAT'S JUST WHAT YOU CALL SOMEONE WHO ACTS IN A WAY THAT'S BENEFICIAL TO YOU.
I... DON'T REALLY LIKE THAT PHRASE.
A "GOOD PERSON"...?
I MEAN...
IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GO ALONG WITH THIS PLAN...
SO...
EVEN IF YOU'RE BEING HELPFUL TO ONE PERSON, YOU MIGHT STILL BE A "BAD PERSON" TO SOMEONE ELSE...
I DON'T THINK ANYONE CAN ACT IN A WAY THAT BENEFITS EVERYONE.

Of course, this is not to deny morality, or to deny basic social custom and etiquette, but there is an element of truth here. Oftentimes, we weaponise empathy, or kindness - we present ourselves as “good people” - he or she is a good person, we are good people, deep down, we are the good ones. I'm actually a really good person - but people don’t see that (read: i want others to see my empathy for them). Deep down, I just want people to see my goodness (or to ignore my flaws and weaknesses, merely for my restraint, or rather lack of ability, to inflict harm on someone). Never forget that he or she has done things, which we are all ashamed of - things which we will take with ourselves to the grave…

Of course, one understands, naturally, the pitfalls of performativeness, or empty platitudes without any sincere belief. But is our ability to conform, or merely not inflict pain on others, a source of virtue? No, not particularly so. Nevermind that in many cases we act in our own self-interest. Nevermind that we expect reciprocation for our supposed “kind” acts, which in many cases becomes a signal for our supposed “virtue”. Beneath the mask lies our resentments and angst, yet we hide behind the comforting illusion of our goodness.

Perhaps thinking in terms of morality (or at least, how it is typically understood) is the problem. As Khuram Elahi Zaheer puts it, referring to Iqbal - “For too long, we have been kept in the paradigm of virtue and vice, rather than good and evil”. Indeed, perhaps, we may even have to look “Beyond Good and Evil”, so to borrow Nietzsche's terminology. Perhaps thinking merely in terms of reflection, rather in terms of action, is also a problem.

We keep ourselves within the social confines of acceptable etiquette and behaviour, how we are meant to act, how we are meant to interact. In modern societies, this artificiality is often met with feelings of stark alienation and dispossession, of the soul not being in sync with the outer material reality of life. Artificial, Fake, like putting on a performance for who knows whose pleasure exactly, as nobody seems to be happy or fulfilled anyways.

In the name of socially acceptable behaviour, we are prevented from bringing about real world change. We are alienated, not merely from ourselves, but from fulfilling our role as representatives of the Divine - as the locus for the manifestation of the Divine attributes. We

are alienated from fully realising ourselves, from reaching the completion of our attributes, manifested in our acts, thus being an image or reflection (albeit a limited, imperfect one) of the Divine (without any resemblance to his transcendence).

We thus risk becoming complicit, passive moral actors, instead of active agents striving for reform, not only of ourselves but of all those around us. Common terminology such as “the common/public good”, “the will of the people”, “legitimacy, authority and mandate to rule” are thus manipulated, supposed empathy or kindness being weaponised to ensure the subversion of the actual collective moral good.

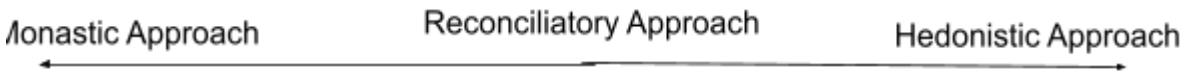
In any case, why should we, or anyone, for that matter, be interested in being “moral” or “acceptable”, not at least how those often want to be conceived. Why be blindly ritualistic, without understanding or appreciating the deeper spirit of what it is we are exactly doing. We are not merely cogs in a machine, nor a puppet on a string - we are human beings, organic entities with agency, endowed with rational faculties, capable of bringing about change in the world. A being bound by destiny to great feats, yet why then shackle him to these supposed "etiquettes".

Morality, thus, should be a guide, a facilitator in helping man achieve the full realisation of his self, through the completion of his attributes manifested through his acts, thus fulfilling the role of divine Vicegerent, being a locus for the manifestation of the Divine Attributes, reflecting the Divine.

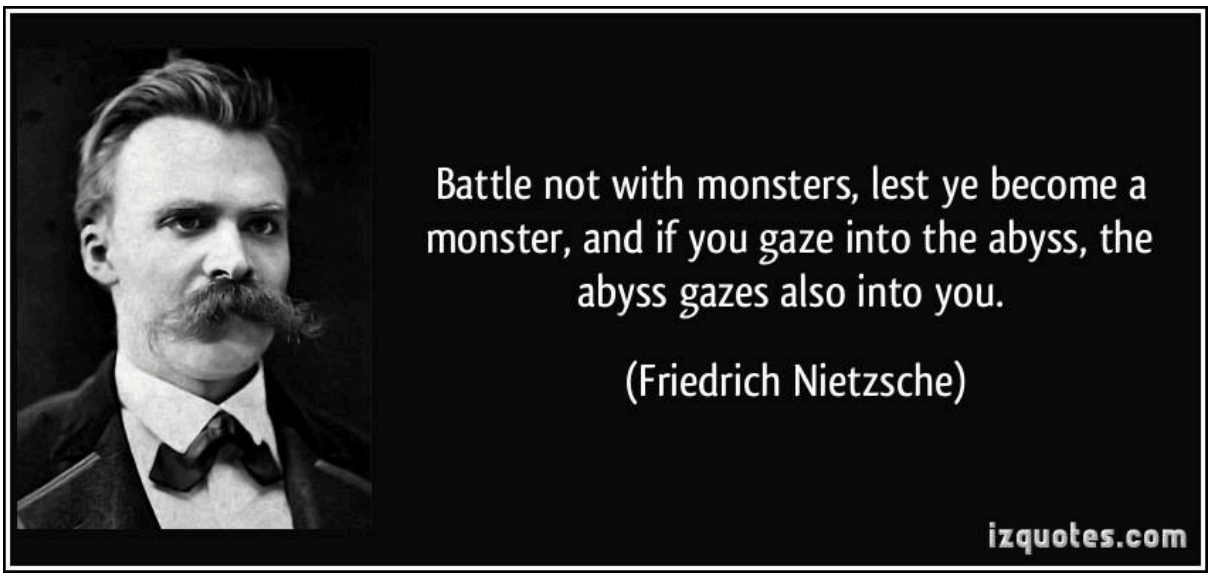
Morality should not be a kind of “slave morality”, binding a man to decadence and stagnation. It should not condemn man to not fully realising himself, and thus by neglecting the role of Divine Vicegerent. This is in contrast to Servitude, via which man is facilitated to the full realisation of himself by moral guidelines, tradition,and one's relationship in obedience to the Divine.

A question may arise - what to do about the dark aspects of humanity?

Man pulls on both light and dark forces. This reflects the kind of Divine mystery of humankind's existence, as reflected in the story of Adam’s creation. In another sense, there is a paradoxical or “contradictory” nature to humanity’s existence. It is in the synthesis and proper application of these that man can be fully realised. This can be simultaneously reflected in discussing the Animalistic and Angelic natures of man.



This “darkness” is part of humanity’s nature. One should incorporate it, but channel it into the “good” and “meaningful”, and not let it control and destroy him. He should not ignore and repress it, lest it eventually overtake him, nor to ignore a fundamental aspect of his nature.


Battle not with monsters, lest ye become a monster, and if you gaze into the abyss, the abyss gazes also into you.
(Friedrich Nietzsche)
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“For if you gaze too long into the abyss, the abyss gazes back into you”. One way to understand this is as follows - be aware of one’s darkness, and draw upon its energy, but don’t let it infiltrate, gain control, and subvert you.

From an Islamic perspective, drawing upon the ideas of Iqbal (see the videos of Khurram Elahi Zaheer for more) - it isn’t a merely monastic tradition, in that it doesn’t call for the repression of one’s desires, nor is it hedonistic in allowing for this unfettered indulging in them. Rather, it channels them within a moral and legal framework.

Thus, we see the institution of Jihad, simultaneously reflecting spiritual and socio-political struggle, applying both in a state of war and peace. The institution of Nikah channels the animalistic desire of lust, but expresses it in a moral manner, with due consideration for the social and sacred nature of marital relationships.

We further see the fundamental permissibility in engaging in the pleasures of the world, such as eating, drinking, and engaging in leisure activities. There are also certain monastic practices instituted, including obligatory ones, such as fasting, those emphasised in the prophetic way, such as the Itikaf (seclusion in the mosque for the last ten days of Ramadan), and voluntary acts as well. These practices allow one to retreat from one’s worldly life and retain his focus on the Divine. And yet, ultimately, Islam has not instituted a monastic lifestyle for its adherents - it encourages its followers to engage with the world, whilst reminding them to retain their focus on the ultimate objective, which is seeking the Divine.

The ultimate consideration, thus, is not for blind ritualism, but for the spirit of the law - the enlightenment of humanity to higher cognizance of God - “ Whoever desires this fleeting world ˹alone˺, We hasten in it whatever We please to whoever We will; then We destine them for Hell, where they will burn, condemned and rejected. But whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it accordingly, and is a ˹true˺ believer, it is they whose striving will be appreciated. “ (Quran 17:18-19).

Man, thus, achieving greater and greater heights, via his servitude to God, realises fully their attributes to the fullest extent. They thereby realise themselves, as reflection of the Divine, thereby fulfilling the role of Divine Vicegerent on Earth.

And yet, all this potential, all this possible growth, is stunted in the mundane, alienating conditions of a stagnant modernity, of a decadent late-stage society… a human existence which fundamentally is fake and artificial, one where nothing feels real anymore… we thus reach a stage of society, one of a late-modern/post-modern kind… an age of the last men, where we see man succumbing to nihilism, to empty hedonism and materialistic pursuits… those who have no sense of honour or glory, those without transcendental purpose…

These are those of the end of history, those who slip through the cracks, those who stray adrift, without any sense of the meaning of it all… they know nothing of the inherent honour and value of man, his place in the grand tapestry of existence, being interwoven into the very fabric of the cosmos itself…

That is, not unless we bear the burden, and take on the mantle of civilization once more. For from the ashes of the old, shall arise a world anew…